

## CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE SHADOW COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the **CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE SCHOOL FORUM** held in Room 15, Priory House, Chicksands on Monday, 2 March 2009.

**Present:**

Malcolm Griffiths  
Sharon Ingham  
Jim Smart  
Anita Lewis  
Ray Payne  
Richard Holland

Jim Parker  
Shirley-Anne Crosbie  
Anne Bell  
Ian Greenley  
Bill Hamilton  
Carol Leggatt

**Other in Attendance:** Peter Skingley - Headteacher of Hillcrest Special School  
Julie Mudd - Headteacher of Sunnyside Special School

**Officers:** Mr Bowmer, Mr Eighteen, Mr Fraser, Mr Green, Mr Heaphy, Ms Hill, Mrs Hobbs, Mr MacFarland, Ms O'Loughlin, Ms Redding, Mr Shevlin and Mr Thompson

### 1. ELECTION OF CHAIR AND VICE-CHAIR

It was proposed, seconded and

**RESOLVED** that Anita Lewis be elected as Chairman of the Central Bedfordshire Schools Forum.

It was proposed, seconded and

**RESOLVED** that Ray Payne be elected as Vice-Chairman of the Central Bedfordshire Schools Forum.

### 2. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Sue Howley, Ian Mitchell, Neil Bramwell, Bill McCarthy and Chris Vesey.

### 3. MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING

**RESOLVED** to approve the Minutes of the meeting of the Central Bedfordshire Schools Forum held on 15 December 2008 as a correct record and to authorise the Chairman to sign them.

#### **4. DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE RESOURCES - INTRODUCTION**

Clive Heaphy, Director of Corporate Resources for Central Bedfordshire introduced himself explaining his role and the services his Directorate covered and the position relating to the Central Bedfordshire budget.

Central Bedfordshire Shadow Council on 26 February 2009 approved a net budget of £165.8m, which moved towards making the £11m saving as set out in the original bid. Council Tax increase would be 2.5% just below the average council tax increases proposed throughout England. Full Council also approved the Capital Programme proposals of up to £50m.

Mr Heaphy confirmed that he was working closely with the Director of Children, Families and Learning and in particular was looking at the Building Schools for the Future investment programme.

**NOTED** that the capital programme relating to Children Services be reported to the next Schools Forum meeting.

#### **5. EXTENDED SCHOOLS FUNDING 2009-2011**

Members received a report on the extended school services' funding that was provided to support schools in delivering the core offer of extended services which all schools had to provide access to by September 2010. The funding was split into two strands:

- Start Up
- Sustainability – this aimed to support every school to engage with the agenda but also ensure that services were supported to become sustainable.

Schools self-selected themselves to each pyramid, the aim of which was to provide equality of provision without disadvantaging schools. Appendix A to the report explored the easily calculated methodologies:

- number of pupils in the pyramid
- number of schools in the pyramid
- an average of these two amounts.

The Forum was advised that the Wootton/Sandy areas were split across Central Bedfordshire and Bedford Borough and would therefore receive a total of £120,000, depending on the methodology agreed.

A concern was expressed that the pyramids did not have an equal number of schools within them and in particular it was felt that the Samuel Whitbread Pyramid was at a disadvantage over its funding level. Members were advised that schools should consider bringing in additional resources and not rely on this funding as the driving force.

Members were also advised that extended service subsidy grant would be available from April 2010 which was expected to produce an increase in funding. This would aim to ensure that extended schools activities would be accessible to all children and young people, including those facing economic disadvantage and children in care.

The Forum agreed that Officers meet to examine the possibility of additional funding streams in relation to the Samuel Whitbread pyramid on an interim basis for 2009/10.

Reason for decision: Pyramids had already devised and submitted Development Plans, based on the 3 year funding previously agreed for 2008/11. Staff had been engaged on 3 year contracts, as part of these plans.

## **RESOLVED**

- 1) to maintain the previously agreed funding at £120,000 and £110,000 per Upper school pyramid for 2009/10 and 2010/11, respectively
- 2) that further discussions take place regarding additional funding for the Samuel Whitbread pyramid and this be reported back to the next Schools Forum meeting.

## **6. EARLY YEARS DEVELOPMENT AND FUNDING APPROACHES**

Members received a report on the Early Years Development and Funding Approaches. From September 2009 Central Bedfordshire was required to roll-out the Free Flexible Extended Offer to the authority's 25% most disadvantaged children and from September 2010 this would be offered to all 3 and 4 year old children. Members were advised that this was optional until September 2010.

Officers had been investigating the most appropriate way of identifying the 25% of the most disadvantaged children. This resulted in identifying the children by post code in the 30% most disadvantaged Super Output Areas (SOAs) using the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) with settings being ranked according to the proportion of children attending from those areas and where another lower ranked setting was situated on the same campus or in the same village these had been included.

The Early Years Reference Group was proposing to offer the same funding mechanisms to both the maintained and private, voluntary and independent (PVI) sectors for the roll-out of the Free Flexible Extended Offer for the 25% most disadvantaged children from September 2009. It was also recommended that there was an increase of 3.45% to £3.60 in Nursery Education Funding for 3 and 4 year olds would mean that the amount available to support one-off bids in Central Bedfordshire would be £101,372.

Reason for decision: The Early Years developments and funding reforms being introduced in 2009/10 and 2010/11, as set out in the report and the Schools Forum agenda of 15 December 2008. The Director of Children, Families and Learning had a statutory responsibility to ensure “equity in the market” between all sectors i.e. maintained and the PVI Sectors.

## **RESOLVED**

- 1) Central Bedfordshire uses the 30% Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) and same site/campus/village approach in the first case to identify settings for the Free Flexible Extended Offer roll-out and if further settings were required due to lack of uptake the bottom 20% Early Years Foundation Stage Profile (EYFSP) and same site/campus/village method is used
- 2) an increase of 3.45% to £3.60 per hour for Nursery Education Funding for Private, Voluntary and Independent (PVI) settings, which was close to the average for the local authorities researched. This increase was fully funded through the increase in the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG). The recommended above inflation increase was due to the Holiday Entitlement for these settings being increased from 4.8 to 5.6 weeks, in addition to payroll and other cost increases. The increased holiday entitlement equates to a 2.05% increase.

## **7. REVIEW OF SPECIAL SCHOOLS’ FUNDING FORMULA**

Members received a report which advised them of the review of the Special Schools’ Funding Formula. From 2009 Bedfordshire County Council had agreed to change the formula so that revenue funding will be targeted more appropriately on pupil need as special schools had reported an increase in the complexity of the needs of the pupils they had in their schools. Members were advised that outreach workers working within schools had proved very successful.

In developing the financial models, Officers and special school Headteachers looked at other authorities’ schemes before deciding on a new set of categories and funding bands for financial modelling. A preferred model for 2009/10, which was detailed to the Forum, was agreed, along with descriptors to define each category precisely.

Members were advised that whilst funding will be targeted more appropriately on pupil need, in some schools it may be necessary to increase the levels of staff, but in some schools, where places have been protected but numbers have reduced, a reduction in staffing in line with the number of pupils may be required.

Members were made aware of the shift of funding between the two new unitary authorities. The SEN Review Steering Group had agreed that there would need to be a cash transfer for 2009/10 and 2010/11 of around £200,000 from Central Bedfordshire to Bedford Borough as the dedicated schools grant (DSG) had been set on the basis of the frozen places of three years ago.

From 2011/12 a new formula for the national distribution of the DSG would be in place, which would negate the need for such a transfer.

Reason for decision: Report on the outcome of work by Officers and Special School Headteachers on a new formula for funding special schools.

**RESOLVED** that the proposed changes to the special school revenue funding formula should be implemented for 2009/10 and reviewed in time to agree any further changes for 2010/11.

## **8. SCHOOLS' FORUM BUDGET**

Members received a report that set out that a budget of £10,000 would be available for each financial year for costs associated with operation of the Forum e.g. hiring a venue, expenses and clerking costs. The level of budget would be reviewed annually.

Members were advised that from experience of the Bedfordshire Schools Forum it is recommended that £5,000 would be sufficient.

Reason for recommendation: Paragraph 13 of the Constitution and Terms of Reference agreed by the Shadow Executive, allowed for the setting of an annual budget (up to £10,000) for the operation of the Forum e.g. meeting and travelling expenses.

**RESOLVED** to set a budget for the Schools' Forum for 2009/10 of £5,000.

## **9. F40 GROUP MEMBERSHIP**

Members received a report on the F40 Group. The F40 Group was a non-political Pressure Group, which represents the lowest funded Local Authorities (LAs) in terms of per pupil funding. The Group is recognised by the Department of Children, Schools and Families in respect of the national review of the Dedicated Schools Grant distribution from 20011/12 onwards. The Group puts forward evidence based papers to the review body, through a retained consultant, who sits on the body.

Members were advised that it was recognised that there was differential funding for different needs but believes the size of the gap between the highest and lowest funded LAs was not fair and equitable.

Reason for decision: The F40 Group was a major stakeholder representative to the Department of Children, Schools and Families in respect of the review of the national distribution of the DSG from 2011.

**RESOLVED** that Central Bedfordshire becomes a member of the F40 Group, representing the lowest funded LAs and that £2,000 from the Schools Forum budget is utilised for the annual subscription.

## **10. REVIEW OF ATTENDANCE MANAGER POSTS**

Members received a report reviewing the position of two Attendance Manager posts for Schools Based Staff across Bedfordshire, which were funded from the Schools Specific Contingency Fund in 2008/09. The objective of the posts was to ensure that there was robust and accurate reporting and recording of sickness absence in schools, reduce sickness rates, advise and train school staff on pre-employment screening and induction, review current practices etc. Two substantive members of the HR team took up the posts on a secondment basis until 31 March 2009.

Members received comparative statistical and financial data on absence levels for Schools Based Staff during 2007 and 2008. The number of cases supported and detailed feedback from Headteachers, through a questionnaire, on the qualitative data in relation to the service provided by the Attendance Managers. The statistics demonstrated that the recorded levels and the cost of sickness absence were increasing, but it was acknowledged that the quality of data previously held was poor with significant gaps and inaccuracies. Feedback from Headteachers indicated that they valued the service and would wish it to continue.

Members concluded that the Attendance Managers had been in post for a relatively short period of time so the longer term benefits had yet to be demonstrated. Members were also concerned that the data available was only for one full term and felt that it would be appropriate to extend the trial period for one year to enable further costs and benefits to be considered during December 2008. Members were advised that funding for the extension of the trial period would be provided from the schools £500k contingency fund.

Members were advised that the total cost for the Attendance Manager for Central Bedfordshire was approximately £40,000 per annum and the service would be included in the optional element of the buy back arrangements for schools.

Reason for decision: To enable further investigation into the costs and benefits of having Attendance Managers.

### **RESOLVED**

- (1) to agree a further year's trial period for an Attendance Manager post for the Council for 2009/10 through a fixed term contract at a total cost of £40,000
- (2) that the Schools Specific Contingency Fund be used to underwrite any shortfall in costs for 2009/10 only as it intended that the post will be self-funding through the buy back arrangements for schools from 2010/11.

**11. APPOINTMENT OF SUB-GROUP REVIEWING SCHOOLS' SURPOLUS BALANCES**

**RESOLVED** that the following be appointed:

Ian Greenley – Church of England Diocese representative  
Jim Smart – Headteacher, Shelton Lower School  
Richard Holland – Governor, Harlington Upper School  
Malcolm Griffiths – Governor, Eaton Bray Lower School  
Shirley-Anne Crosbie – Headteacher, Glenwood Special School

**12. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

**RESOLVED** that the next meeting be held on Monday, 29 June 2009 at 6.00 p.m. at Priory House, Chicksands.

Chairman